

Indeed it was for my own peace

That I had great bitterness;

But You have lovingly delivered my soul from the pit of corruption,

For You have cast all my sins behind Your back.

Isaiah 38:17 NKJV



FOR MEN—THAT IS, THE MALE OF THE SPECIES—there are few things more painful than a toothache.

Since we of the Testosterone are spared the sensual pleasures of childbirth, we must ratchet down our upper-limit expectations. Perhaps the only other sensation vying for top spot is seasickness. Having experienced the gorge-rising tremblers of seasickness during my 1970s Vietnam pleasure cruise (courtesy of the US Navy), I can safely say that I have no desire to repeat the experience, but it cannot replace a full-bore, raw nerve, head-banger toothache as Number One on the pain Hit Parade.

It will come as no surprise that this writer is currently in the throes of an A-1, First Class toothache. One of my larger chewing

teeth has gone amiss beneath its crown, and the prescribed remedy will be one more in a long succession of root canals (I'm quite fertile when it comes to rotten roots).

After a long night without slumber, I finally had some relief yesterday, thanks to the palliative blessings of a small white narcotic. If it is true there are few things more painful than a toothache, then it is also true there are few things more satisfying than the cessation of same. Relentless pain of any kind amplifies the sweetness of relief—just as the sweetness of confession and forgiveness is intensified after one has labored long under the weight of unconfessed sin.

Reflections
by the Pond

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When I kept silent about my sin, my body
wasted away
Through my groaning all day long.
For day and night Your hand was heavy
upon me;
My vitality was drained away as with the
fever heat of summer. Selah.

Psalms 32:3-4

King David was in pain. He had sinned most egregiously against his God—and had kept quiet about it. He had caused the death of a man, as specifically and purposefully as if he had himself turned the knife. He had murdered, and for what cause? To clear the way for him to possess the man's wife. In no time at all the sins had piled up: voyeurism, lechery, adultery, and now murder. Then, to put the capper on this ignominious list, King David went on with his life as if he had done nothing wrong.

Then one day God sent to the king the prophet Nathan, who unblinkingly declared

God's grace, given the opportunity to confess and be forgiven.

How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,
Whose sin is covered!
How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity,
And in whose spirit there is no deceit!

Psalms 32:1-2

Like a persistent, nagging toothache, Father God permits no peace for the believer who tries to live with unconfessed sin. The indwelling Spirit works, sometimes gradually, sometimes with brute force. Yet the pain does not come from our Father. The pain and misery is of our own making, the product of our rebellion.

But the grace is all His.

When we confess our sins God does not hesitate to bring relief. Like a skilled dentist, He drills down to the source of the pain—the

*The chains that have bound me are flung to the wind,
By the mercy of God the poor slave is set free;
And the strong grace of heaven breathes fresh o'er the mind,
Like the bright winds of summer that gladden the sea.*

*There was nought in God's world half so dark or so vile
As the sin and the bondage that fettered my soul;
There was nought half so base as the malice and guile
Of my own sordid passions, or Satan's control.*

*I cried out for mercy, and fell on my knees,
And confessed, while my heart with keen sorrow was wrung;
'Twas the labor of minutes, and years of disease
Fell as fast from my soul as the words from my tongue.*

*And now, blest be God and the sweet Lord who died!
No deer on the mountain, no bird in the sky
No bright wave that leaps on the dark bounding tide,
Is a creature so free or so happy as I.*

*All hail, then, all hail, to the dear Precious Blood,
That hath worked these sweet wonders of mercy in me;
May each day countless numbers throng down to its flood,
And God have His glory, and sinners go free.*

Frederick William Faber

David guilty—guilty of all the sins he had failed to acknowledge. Without argument or excuse, David, this “man after God's own heart,” immediately confessed his sin.

I acknowledged my sin to You,
And my iniquity I did not hide;
I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord”;
And You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah.

Psalms 32:5

And the measure of the pain under which he had been suffering is seen in the measure of David's relief at being found out and, by

inflamed corruption hiding deep beneath the normal-looking surface—releasing and expunging that which does not belong.

And within moments we are overwhelmed—even surprised—by the unbounded joy that accompanies His forgiveness and soul-cleansing.

